

The BAY LEAF

March 2000



California Native Plant Society • East Bay Chapter • Alameda & Contra Costa Counties

Calendar of Events

March 1, WEDNESDAY:

- **Board of Directors' meeting** at the home of Delia Taylor, 1851 Catalina Ave., Berkeley. 7:30 p.m. All members welcome.

March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31, FRIDAYS:

- **Native Here Nursery** open, 9 a.m.-noon (see p. 2).

March 4, SATURDAY:

- **Native Plant Restoration Team** meets at 10 a.m. for restoration work in Tilden Park (see p. 2).

March 5, MONDAY:

- **Deadline for April Bay Leaf.** Give items to Phoebe Watts or Brett Boltz.

March 7, 14, 21 and 28, TUESDAYS:

- **Propagation and planting sessions** for the October sale of native plants (see p. 2).

March 11 and 25, SATURDAYS:

- **Native Here Nursery** open, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (see p. 2).

March 22, WEDNESDAY:

- **Membership meeting**, 7:30 p.m. (see below).

April 5, WEDNESDAY:

- **Board of Directors' meeting** at the home of Charli Danielsen, 10 Kerr Ave, Kensington. 7:30 p.m. All members welcome.

Membership Meeting

Wednesday, March 22 ♦ 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Dr. Barbara Ertter

Plants and Biogeography of Iran Compared to Western North America

If one were to look around the world for a country with the greatest biogeographical similarities to western North America, Iran would rank high on the list of candidates. Both areas, of comparable size and latitude, are dominated by large, interior-draining plateaus in the rain-shadow of high mountain ranges, with most precipitation falling in the winter months. These biogeographical similarities translate into a tremendous opportunity for invaluable comparative studies of fundamental significance to agriculture and land management practices in both countries. This has long been appreciated, resulting in a fruitful scientific interchange that was interrupted by the Iranian revolution in 1979.

As a ground-breaking initiative, two women scientists from Berkeley became the first American-based botanists to be invited back to Iran in two decades. In May 1999, Dr. Fosiee Tahbaz (formerly a professor of plant physiology at the College of Agriculture of the University of Tehran) and Dr. Barbara Ertter (Curator of Western North

American Flora at the University of California and Jepson Herbaria) spent three weeks in northern and central Iran, hosted by several universities. In addition to on-campus lectures and interactions with faculty, staff, and students, Tahbaz and Ertter were taken to a diversity of field sites where they could observe the native vegetation and a variety of land use practices.

Join Barbara Ertter as she presents a glimpse into the current state of botany and land management in Iran, highlighting the biogeographical similarities with western North America and the kinds of questions that can be addressed by comparative studies between the two regions.

The meeting will take place in the Conference Center of the University of California Botanical Garden on Centennial Drive east of the Memorial Stadium above the main campus of the University of California in Berkeley. The Garden gate will open at 7 p.m.; the meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served after the meeting and CNPS books and other publications will be on display and available for purchase. For more information, please call Jodi McGraw at 528-5090.

Native Plant Restoration Activities

Native Here Nursery News

Some of the perennials are flowering. Come see the results of last year's seed collection. Depending on weather, it may not be too late to plant some things.

Native Here could use more volunteers. Just come to the nursery during posted hours ready to pitch in and start helping. Plants always need grooming as pine needles collect on them. There are always seedlings to put in little pots, or plants in little pots ready to be put into larger ones. Labels are an ongoing chore. Help with writing up sales or answering the phone is also welcome.

Native Here is at 101 Golf Course Dr. in Tilden Park, across from the entrance to Tilden Park Golf Course. It is open every Friday morning from 9 a.m. to noon and the second and fourth Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. More volunteers are needed in order to be open more Saturdays.

If you are interested in attracting butterflies to your garden, there is a list of local plant species the nursery is likely to grow and the local butterfly species which use them. There are also other interesting papers as well as a reference library on native plant restoration at the nursery. Visitors are welcome to browse the office bookshelves.

Silent Auction

A handsome pine chest with brass fittings and a carving of the Mt. Diablo Fairy Lantern was donated to the chapter by its maker, Al Swittalla, one of Native Here's

valued volunteers. The chest will be on display at the membership meetings for people to bid on it. The final bid will be taken at the April membership meeting and the chest awarded to the highest bidder. A picture and description is being prepared for the web site, too.

. . . Charli Danielsen

Native Plant Restoration Team

The Team met at Native Here but decided not to go to Gwin Canyon due to the heavy rain. Our schedule is shaping up for the spring—a March visit to pull oblong spurge (*Euphorbia oblongata*) in Tilden Park, at the same site we worked over in December. There seems to be a good response from the many native forbs and grasses there. On April 15 (NOT our usual first Saturday of the month) we will gather with a group of Earth Day/restoration-minded folks in El Sobrante to help in a creek project, removing Algerian ivy and encouraging the native blue elderberries, willows and California box elders. Other projects for later in the spring include joining with Friends of Five Creeks to work on the Buchanan St. Salt Marsh, and a return to Skyline Serpentine Prairie for yellow star thistle removal.

Meet on Saturday, March 4 at the Native Here Nursery, 101 Golf Course Drive in Tilden Park, across from the Golf Course main entrance. Please note that we've switched back to our non-winter schedule, now that the Wayne Roderick Lecture Series is finished for the season: Meet at 10 a.m. at Native Here, and plan on working until 2 p.m. or later. Wear pants and a long sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes, a rain coat just in case. Heavy rain cancels.

. . . Noah Booker

Plant Sale Activities



Propagation and Potting this month:

Tuesdays, March 7, 14, 21, and 28
9 a.m. - noon

Merritt College Landscape Horticulture Area

Preparing cuttings of perennials and herbaceous plants is on the agenda as new growth in the garden begins to get firmer. Cuttings of shrubs that went into the greenhouse in late Fall are now rooted and going into small pots.

Come up to the growing grounds at Merritt and join us on Tuesday mornings. Bring a lunch if you can stay. On

busy days we work into early afternoon, too. More information at (925) 376-4095.

Our 34th annual Plant Sale will be on October 7 & 8, 2000.

A thank-you for books donated from their native plant library goes to Jack and Edna Lewis. They are relocating their home to Washington State, and we will miss them in their volunteer roles at the annual plant sale. (Look for a "previously-owned" section on the book table at the Sale.)

. . . Shirley McPheeters

Rare Plant Notes

The CNPS Rare Plant Committee is embarking on a new project this spring and we need your help! If you have been an East Bay Chapter member for more than a few years you have probably read articles by myself or Dianne Lake appealing for help and information on rare and unusual plant occurrences in the East Bay. During this same time period, numerous publications about the East Bay flora have become available, including a status report on rare plants by myself, a status report on unusual plants by Dianne Lake, the East Bay plant checklist by Barbara Ertter and Tony Morosco or the update to Mary Bowerman's *Mt. Diablo Flora* (in press). All of these publications have advanced our knowledge about the East Bay flora and have documented numerous new populations or previously unknown occurrences of rare and unusual plants in the East Bay. Many of these plants are known from a single occurrence, which may have been collected or noted more than 100 years ago. Some of these plants are still present, or appear to be more widespread than originally thought. Examples include the large-flowered fiddleneck (*Amsinckia grandiflora*) near Lawrence Livermore Site 300 and Congdon's tarplant (*Hemizonia parryi* ssp. *congdonii*) in the Tri-Valley area.

Other plants have recently been documented by CNPS members or others that may have been historically overlooked, or became evident as a result of changed land management practices, or may have found their way to the East Bay through other natural or human causes. Examples here include Oregon meconella (*Meconella oregana*) in the Oakland Hills, serpentine dwarf flax (*Hesperolinon serpentinum*) south of Livermore, Franciscan thistle (*Cirsium andrewsii*) on San Pablo Ridge above Orinda and a yet to be confirmed occurrence of San Francisco popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys diffusus*) on serpentinite near Redwood Regional Park.

One would think that with so many qualified professional and amateur botanists pursuing the East Bay for the past 100 years that every square inch of land would have been surveyed and the flora would be 'known.' However recent surprises demonstrate that we still have much to learn. It has been exciting when other rare plants thought to have been extinct or extirpated from the East Bay are rediscovered. Recent examples include the rediscovery of the diamond petaled poppy (*Eschscholzia rhombipetala*) at Lawrence Livermore Site 300 near Corral Hollow, rayless ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) at Carnegie State Vehicle Recreation Area and Contra Costa goldfields (*Lasthenia conjugens*) at Warm Springs in Fremont and at Rodeo. These recent rediscoveries give us hope that other plants might also be rediscovered if we just had enough people looking at the right time and at the right place.

For the past year, Louise Belle and I have been working on a new project to develop illustrations, photographs and other descriptive information about some of the rare and unusual plants that are thought to be extinct throughout their original range (including the East Bay) or have been extirpated from the East Bay but are present elsewhere. In the next few issues of the *Bay Leaf* we plan to profile a 'Rare or Unusual Plant of the Month.' As time and space permits, the profiles will include illustrations, photographs and descriptive information on legal status, historical occurrences, habitat, threats, identification, documentation methods and who to contact about these plants. We also plan to conduct limited field trips to visit extant populations outside the East Bay or look at herbarium specimens, and then to look at potentially suitable habitat and historic locations within the East Bay.

We hope that you will be able to participate in these surveys or conduct needed research to help with this important project. Please call me if you want to volunteer for this effort.

. . . Brad Olson,
Rare Plant Coordinator

Rare Plant of the Month

Alkali milk vetch (*Astragalus tener* var. *tener*)

Alkali milk vetch is an inconspicuous annual herbaceous member of the pea family with pinnately compound leaves, pinkish-purple flowers (sometimes fading to white), greenish pods that fade to a straw-color or sometimes black as the plant matures. It has no formal designation under either the State or Federal Endangered Species Acts, however it is currently on CNPS* List 1B of plants that are considered rare, threatened or endangered in California and elsewhere. The Department of Fish and Game considers all CNPS List 1B plants to be eligible for State-listing, and as such, they should be fully considered during the preparation of environmental documents for land use projects.

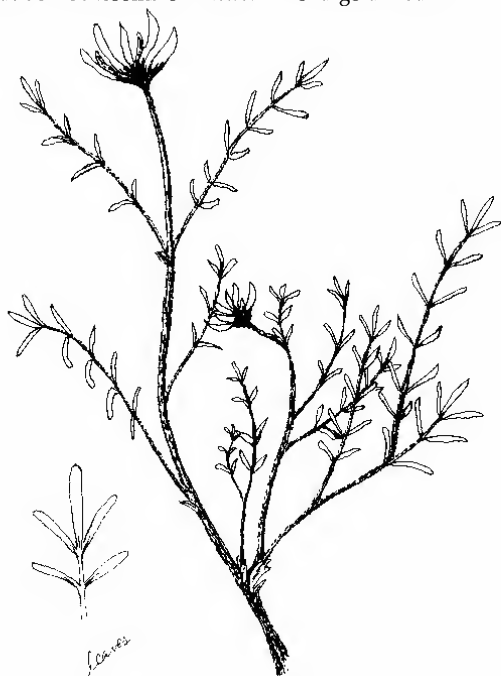
Alkali milk vetch was known from thirteen counties in California, including both Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, however it is now known only from Merced, Solano and Yolo Counties. Typical habitat for alkali milk vetch consists of alkali playas, vernal pools and moist grasslands with heavy clay soils. These habitats were

(continued on page 4)

once considerably more widespread in California, however a large portion have been lost through agricultural conversion, water diversion, and development. While it is likely that excessive livestock grazing has had an adverse effect of this species, other threats, such as displacement by invasive non-native vegetation and grass thatch build-up from fire suppression or lack of herbivory (including livestock grazing) are not well documented.

Within the East Bay, alkali milk vetch was known from Alameda, Oakland, San Leandro, Hayward, Union City, Newark, Fremont, Livermore and Byron. Most of this original habitat has been lost or substantially converted to other uses. Potential habitat that remains for Alkali milk vetch includes the Warm Springs area near Fremont, the Springtown Alkali Sink near Livermore and the Byron Airport/Hot Springs area in southeast Contra Costa County. While all three of these areas have been surveyed at some point and no alkali milk vetch has been documented since 1959, it is still possible that alkali milk vetch persists in the soil seed bank and could reoccur under favorable conditions.

There are seven species in the genus *Astragalus* that have been documented to occur in the East Bay. Three of these, *A. asymmetricus*, *A. nuttallii*, and *A. oxyphrys* are large, showy, perennial upland subshrubs or vines that do not resemble *A. tener*. The large annual *A.*



Astragalus tener var. *tener*



Astragalus brewerii

didymocarpus occurs in dry, open areas and the more diminutive rare annual *A. brewerii* superficially resembles *A. tener* in size and habit. However *A. tener* has notched leaflets and *A. brewerii* has unnotched leaflets, whitish flowers, and is found in upland areas, often on serpentine derived soils. Finally, the remaining distinction is with the annual *A. gambelianus* which is common in the East Bay. It occurs in open grasslands and shrublands, and will grow to the edges of vernal pools and other wetland areas. In flower, *A. gambelianus* has a banner of approximately 3 mm, whereas the banner on *A. tener* is in excess of 8 mm. In fruit, *A. gambelianus* has rounded pendant fruits of approximately 4 mm and *A. tener* fruits are linear, often well in excess of 10 mm. Please see the accompanying illustrations that were prepared for the East Bay Chapter by Louise Belle.

This spring, the rare plant committee will be conducting one or more field trips to look for this plant during its identification period which runs from late March through early June. We hope that you will join us on one of these trips and perhaps even rediscover this missing member of the East Bay's flora. Please call me if you have information about this plant or if you would like to join us in our search to rediscover this plant.

. . . Brad Olson
Rare Plant Coordinator

2000 Board of Directors

Elected Officers

President:

Barbara Erter 1859 Catalina Ave., Berkeley 94707 h/ 526-4592
w/ 643-0600

Vice-president:

Administration:

Tony Morosco 2329 7th St., Berkeley 94710 h/ 549-2238
w/ 642-8468

Treasurer:

Holly Forbes 7128 Blake St., El Cerrito 94530 234-2913
w/ 643-8040

Secretaries:

Recording:

Michele Lee 2923 Sheldon Dr., Richmond 94803 243-1265

Corresponding:

Jeanne Kerbavaz Calif, State Parks, 250 Executive Park Blvd.,
Suite 4900, San Francisco 94134 w/ (415) 330-6323

Advisors

Members-at-large:

John Game 1155 Spruce St., Berkeley 94707 527-7855
Jim Sharp 2663 LeConte Ave., Berkeley 94709 644-9344
Jae Willingham 2512 Etna St., Berkeley 94704 841-4681

Bay Leaf Editors

Phoebe Watts 1419 Grant St., Berkeley 94703 525-6614
fax/ 524-4496

Brett Boltz 2210 Spaulding Ave., Berkeley 94703 h/ 549-3327
w/ 643-0448

Recorded Chapter Information: 464-4977

CNPS Home Page:

<http://www.cnps.org>

East Bay Chapter CNPS Home Page:

<http://www.ebcnps.org>

All area codes are 510 unless noted



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Committee Coordinators

Bay Leaf Mailing:

Holly Forbes 7128 Blake St., El Cerrito 94530 234-2913

Conservation:

Tim Heelan 6009F. Jaquini Murieta Ave., Newark 94560 226-8294

Plant Communities:

Susan Bainbridge 2408 Parker St., Berkeley 94704 548-2918

Rare Plants:

Brad Olson 4442 Arcadia Ave., Oakland 94602 482-0794

Unusual Plants:

Dianne Lake 1050 Bayview Farm Rd., #121, Pinole 94564 741-8066

Donations:

David Bigham 1452 La Loma Ave., Berkeley 94708 843-4247

Myrtle Wolf 181 Stonewall Rd., Berkeley 94704 843-8759

Education:

Ely Bade 2699 Shasta Rd., Berkeley 94708 644-1656

Kathleen Dickey 2374 Eunice St., Berkeley 94708 525-6489

Field trips:

Vacant position

Growing natives group:

Glenn Keator 1455 Catherine Dr., Berkeley 94702 527-9802

Hospitality:

Irene Wilkinson 440 Camino Sobrante, Orinda 94563 (925) 254-3675

Legislation:

Roy Buck 848-4169 email: roybuck@msn.com

Membership:

Delia Taylor 1851 Catalina Ave., Berkeley 94707 527-3912

Native Here Nursery:

Charli Danielsen 101 Golf Course Dr., Berkeley 94708 549-0211
email: cwd@wli.net

Native Plant Restoration Team:

Noah Booker 6366 Valley View Rd., Oakland 94611 h/ 339-1588
w/ 840-9367 email: casartunda@aol.com

Posters:

Heather Koshinsky 2033 Carquinez Ave., El Cerrito 94530 w/ 559-5977

Plant Sale:

Shirley McPheeters 104 Ivy Dr., Orinda 94563 (925) 376-4095

Phoebe Watts 1419 Grant St., Berkeley 94703 525-6614

Publicity:

Baine Jackson 3311 Estudillo St., Martinez 94553 (925) 372-0687

Programs:

Jodi McGraw 8259 Terrace Dr., El Cerrito 94730 528-5090
email: jmmcgraw@socrates.berkeley.edu

EBRP Botanic Garden Liaison:

Jenny Fleming 2750 Shasta Rd., Berkeley 94708 848-3455

New Membership Application

The California Native Plant Society is open to all. The mission of the California Native Plant Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, and conservation. Membership includes a subscription to the quarterly journal *Fremontia*.

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Telephone _____

I wish to affiliate with:

____ East Bay Chapter (Alameda and Contra Costa Counties)

____ Other _____

Mail application and check to:

Membership Chairman, California Native Plant Society, 1722 J St., Suite 17, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Membership category:

____ Student, Retired, limited income, \$20

____ Individual, Library, \$35

____ Household, Family, or Group, \$45

____ Supporting, \$75

____ Plant lover, \$100

____ Patron, \$250

____ Benefactor, \$500

____ Life, \$1000

Activities of Others

Hikes on Mt. Diablo, sponsored by the Mt. Diablo Interpretive Association.

Saturday hikes depart from Mitchell Canyon Interpretive Center at 10 a.m. Contact for details: Linda Sanford, (510) 848-4813 or Ljsanford@aol.com. March 11, Mitchell Canyon Rd. Explore plant communities. 3-4 miles. April 8, Mitchell Canyon. Identification of spring wildflowers. 2-4 miles or longer if desired.

Sunday hikes. Contact for details: Ken Lavin, (925) 686-0793 or (925) 686-9393 or bklavin@aol.com. March 5, Black Hills-Balancing Rock. Meet Curry Pt. turn-out, South Gate Rd., 9 a.m. Moderately strenuous, 8 miles, elevation gain about 1,000 ft. April 2, Pine Canyon-Wall Ridge Loop. Meet Machado Ranch trailhead at end of Green Valley Rd. in Alamo. 6 miles, 800 ft. elevation gain. Flower identification!

The **California Lichen Society** presents, as part of its Spring Speaker Series: on Wednesday, March 15, Mona Bourell, California Academy of Sciences, gives a slide presentation on **Bryophytes**; and on Wednesday, April 19, Dr. Richard Moe of UC Berkeley will discuss **Algae**. Both meetings will be held at 7 p.m. at the University Herbarium, 1001 Valley Life Sciences Bldg., University of California, Berkeley. No charge. Enter at the north end of the building. Evening parking is available for \$3 in quarters. Berkeley BART station is nearby. Questions? Call Judy Robertson, (707) 584-8099 or JKSRR@aol.com.

The Jepson Herbarium is offering a couple of workshops in March. The first is a Weekend Workshop on **Microbiotic Soil Crusts and Lichens of the Eastern Mojave Desert**, which will be held March 10-12 at the Desert

Studies Center in the Mojave Desert. This course, taught by Larry St. Clair, will emphasize the basic structural and functional aspects of arid land soil crust communities, and include laboratory work and a day long field trip to several locations in the Mojave Desert. The second course, **Basics of Botanical Illustration** is being offered on March 18-19 and/or March 26-26. Participants of these two weekend courses will learn how to render pencil drawings of plants and plant parts with scientific accuracy. No prior experience is necessary. The course is taught by Linda A. Vorobik. The fee for each course is \$160 members, \$175 non-members. Contact Staci Markos or Betsy Ringrose at the Jepson Herbarium (643-7008) for more information or a registration form.

Native Plant Sale in April

Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Tilden Park

The Annual Spring Sale of Native Plants will take place on Saturday, April 15, 2000 at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. The sale is put on by the Volunteers, who meet weekly, year round, to raise the plants for the sale. This year's sale promises lots of lupines of various colors; yellow columbines (*Aquilegia*), pink-flowering currants (*Ribes*), *Iris*, and many other treasures.

Please bring cardboard boxes, if possible, to carry your purchases. Refreshments will also be sold by the Volunteers. The Botanic Garden is on Wildcat Canyon Road at the foot of South Park Drive, in Tilden Park. Admission is free. Information: 841-8732.

California Native Plant Society
East Bay Chapter
P.O. Box 5597, Elmwood Station
Berkeley, CA 94705

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